



IAN ALAN PAUL 2017-01-26

10 PRELIMINARY THESES ON TRUMP

NONPOLITICS CAPITAL, DETERRITORIALIZATION, LEFT POLITICS, TRUMPISM, VIRTUALITY

1. Trump's power is fundamentally virtual in form.

Propose this, suggest that, lie about yesterday, declare the inevitability of that which is yet to come, retreat from one position while advancing on two more, contradict oneself, tweet about the greatest possible number of arbitrary things, attack, provoke, feign movement, never apologize or restrain oneself, hint at gesture, sound the dog whistle, appear still, expand interpretations, proliferate noise, introduce turbulence, obscure predictability in dense fogs of possibility. Trump's power arises not from any individual act but from the multiplication of possible acts.

2. Defending truths against Trump is to mistake the present battlefield entirely.

Journalists and politicians alike are unable to meaningfully respond to, resist, or rebuke Trump because they approach him as something singular and consistent, whereas he acts multiply and chaotically. They aim to pull down something which already is, whereas Trump has already departed from the here and now towards any number of things that could possibly be instead. While everyone keeps busy defending fragile shelters of truth, Trump has moved into his golden palace built on a foundation of a glistening "what if?"

3. As Trump proceeds, what is imaginable, permissible, and ultimately doable for the Right will multiply in every direction and across every axis.

In the back of a bus, like a little schoolboy, Trump can barely contain his excitement as he describes how he can "grab them by the pussy." Words that used to only be whispered slowly reappear in everyday conversations with a dangerous allure. Young men on college campuses complain about white genocide. Swastikas are sprayed on barn doors. A family sits down for breakfast at a diner with camouflage assault rifles strung over their shoulders. The right, feeling liberated at last from liberal political correctness, feminist shaming, white guilt, academic criticism, media reporting, and any kind of scrutiny in general, go on to dream of the birth of new worlds that resemble imaginary old ones.

4. The left, sensing fascism on the horizon, retreats to defend the walls of a liberal democracy hallucinated in the fever of the present.

Don't normalize this! Investigate Russia! Organize for the midterms! Start the impeachment process! Release the taxes! The constitution must be defended at all costs! These will be the rallying cries of the liberal Left that finds solace in the fantasy of an uncompromised past, the inverse mirror of the Right's "traditional America." This is an America without Guantanamo Bay. An America where drones have never seen flight. An America without police executions. It is an American democracy that irresistibly arcs towards justice. It's an America that doesn't exist. In the terrifying shadow of Trump's virtuality, the left seeks out security in the same institutions that enabled his appearance.

5. Trump's virtuality is the virtuality of capital.

Trump is the avatar of a neoliberal insurrection against the liberal forces that have historically attempted to soften, slow, humanize, and manage capitalism. He is the bleeding edge, the frothing crest of a wave of deterritorialization, the spray-tanned frontier of global capital. He is the combed-over contagion that will finally bring the capitalist crisis that has so far largely been contained in the Global South to the Global North. For both Trump and capital, limits are only there to be overcome, success means success at any cost, and everything that exists only exists for the taking by those with the courage and ingenuity to dare to. It is never a question of whether something is possible, but rather of what new transgression needs to be performed to make it so.

6. Only those parts of the state that are absolutely necessary to defend wealth will remain.

The police and army will become increasingly indistinguishable and will find support while the extraneous is slashed, cut, and left to decompose in the heat of rapidly rising global temperatures. As more and more is secured for capital, everything will become less so. When everything becomes property, simply being alive constitutes trespassing, and as the rich accumulate impossibly large sums of wealth they will find that they have no safe place to keep it. The distinction between politics and war, if there ever were a meaningful one, will become impossible to see in the clouds of tear gas that will persistently hang in the air of financial centers.

7. The reterritorializing forces of capital no longer keep up with the accompanying forces of deterritorialization, unavoidably leading us into new intensities of capitalist crisis.

The disciplinary power of jails, hospitals, schools, checkpoints, and border fences now do little to ward off riots and waves of migrants and refugees. Closed bank branches in Athens burn while the bottom of the Mediterranean and the deserts of Arizona become ever more populous graveyards. Markets flash-crash as algorithms detect something that humans cannot. Energy corporations that endlessly lobby against environmental restrictions now simultaneously make pleas for responses to climate change. The flows unleashed by the global economy are spilling over the dams meant to profit from them, and even those at the top find themselves in the floodplains below. The possibilities of the new threaten to wholly extinguish life in the now.

8. As lived reality becomes ever more precarious and ultimately unsustainable, life will require more and more mediation to be managed.

Images will accelerate and proliferate at rates unimagined as possible before. Pepe the Frog will be remixed, reinterpreted, recaptioned, and reuploaded by every political tendency and faction, while videos of Richard Spencer being punched by the black bloc will be synchronized with every song to ever appear on Billboard Top 100 charts and uploaded to a playlist on youtube. Presidential press conferences will be accompanied by applause tracks, while social network executives will prepare to become politicians. Everyone will retweet Trump and Trump will retweet everyone. Writers in Eastern Europe will make up news stories for websites in Mexico to undermine trade deals with China. Everything will become more recognizable and less distinguishable as the deepening poverty of reality is compensated by ever more sophisticated forms of media.

9. When the present has fully entered into its own formal disintegration, Trump's virtuality will necessarily become our own.

As a life becomes less possible, it will increasingly have to resort to what it can become instead. Sometimes this will only become manifest as pure fantasy: in the American dream, in shiny skyscrapers that effortlessly and gracefully float above the chaos below, on a rural commune, in outer space, on The Apprentice, in the wild wildernesses beyond civilization that fill survivalists' minds. At other times, this will become manifest in radical experimentation in the streets that find themselves in direct confrontation with Trump's storm troopers. Either way, the present will overflow with many different versions of what must become possible instead.

10. The present crisis being virtually ushered in by Trump must be met with a crisis of our own making.

As things increasingly disintegrate, it will not be possible to remake what has become undone. Awash in a world without limits or meaning, a place where the possibility of life itself has become threatened by the possibilities unleashed under capitalism, the only way out may be to introduce a crisis of a different kind, one that posits a fundamentally different register of possibility. In the playful invention of new repertoires, in the forging of new collectivities, in the experimentation with new practices of living, perhaps something else, something otherwise can begin. In the coming years, it will be our task to make possible that which cannot be under capitalism.

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